



CCM Testimony

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 15, 2023

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 168 towns and cities.

HB 6881 An Act Concerning Various Revisions To The Education Statutes Related To Educator Compensation And Paraeducators

The bill would, among other things, (1) mandate particular trainings for paraeducators, (2) require particular board of education reporting of paraeducator staffing, (3) require a grant program to supplement paraeducator salaries, (4) establish a minimum pay for paraeducators, and (5) require particular benefits to be offered to paraeducators.

Paraeducators play a vital role in our educational system. They are a resource and provide support for teachers and students. The impact of COVID on our educational system has been dramatic, and the decrease of educators and paraeducators in our state has been exacerbated this issue. CCM supports state efforts to address the shortage of paraprofessionals by developing and funding enhanced pathway programs to increase the number of certified paraeducators and special education teachers in the state.

CCM appreciates the provisions in the bill that would help support educator and paraeducator salaries. In addition, CCM supports removing barriers and mandated training that will allow the flexibility and opportunity to focus on the learning environment for students.

CCM does have concerns with several other provisions in HB 6881. This would include minimum salaries and mandated benefits for paraeducators. Retirement benefits for employees needs to remain within the local collective bargaining process. Each municipality should have the ability to implement a benefits program that best supports their employees, while also ensuring that the cost and structure to provide those benefits are within the fiscal constraints of the municipality and their taxpayers. Again, this requirement may increase property taxes or a decrease in municipal services.

Recruiting and retaining appropriate staffing levels for educators should be a priority for state and local officials. In doing so, a balance needs to remain to ensure that particular incentives do not impose undue burden on local budgets and property taxpayers. All of the state programs require funding, which could fluctuate each year. However, the municipal mandates that would be imposed do not afford any flexibility and circumvent the collective bargaining process.

CCM urges the committee to take the above-mentioned factors into consideration before acting on HB 6881.

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If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, Chief Strategy Officer of CCM at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or 203-500-7556.